



April 28, 2020

Planning Commission

c/o Guille Nunez
100 North Garfield Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91101

Re: Conditional Use Permit: Cannabis Retailer Application #6788: Request to Allow the Retail Sales of Cannabis at 536 S. Fair Oaks Avenue for MME Pasadena Retail, Inc.

Dear Planning Commission:

We were disappointed to learn that the city is focusing its energy and attention on cannabis permits during this critical time in our history, rather than working to help Pasadena's citizens and struggling small businesses. This is an unsettling and uncertain time, and a time in which people turn towards their leaders for guidance and assistance. It appears that the businesses getting the guidance and assistance from our city are the hopeful cannabis retailers -- not even yet businesses operating in Pasadena. Is this really the right time to be spending critical resources debating cannabis permits?

Furthermore, we are wondering why a Planning Commission hearing is scheduled during temporary quarantine orders when meetings cannot be fully attended by citizens. Certainly, meetings that affect the people of Pasadena should only go forward with full notice and an opportunity to be heard. It is not clear that has happened here. There are many issues pressing upon the businesses and people in Pasadena, and it is doubtful that Planning Commission meeting notices are getting the attention of those that receive them. These are important issues that will have long-term effects on the businesses and families that surround the proposed sites. The people and businesses in Pasadena deserve a chance to be heard on this matter. It would be more appropriate for these types of decisions to be postponed until they can be heard through the regular public process.

Additionally, why are Planning Commission meetings going forward when it was determined that City Council meetings should not? It seems clear that if the benchmarks of technology, notice, methods of public participation, and the ability to debate a subject are met here, they should be met for City Council meetings as well. Likewise, if they cannot be met for City Council meetings, then they would not be met here. We are unclear as to why there is a different approach for the same types of city meetings.

With respect to our specific concerns regarding the proposed dispensary at 536 South Fair Oaks Avenue:

1. The proposed site is located 200 feet away from the Arroyo Treatment Center, an intensive outpatient rehabilitation center. Individuals treated at this location are managing substance abuse issues and psychological disorders. Our zoning code requires all dispensaries to be located at least 600 feet away from a substance abuse center. Therefore, the proposed location is excluded from possible cannabis retail locations and the permit must be denied.

2. The proposed site is located in a professional medical corridor, which includes Huntington Hospital and Shriners Medical Center. These two hospitals are sensitive receptors. Permitting a cannabis retailer at this location would be inconsistent with our General Plan.

3. Although Union Station Homeless Shelter is located just outside the 600 ft radius from the proposed site, the proximity of this important city resource to the proposed cannabis retailer should be carefully considered. The surrounding area struggles with incredible public issues. Adding the issues that are brought, inevitably, by a cannabis retailer should be carefully weighed. It seems that there would be other more appropriate locations for a cannabis retailer.

4. The reputation of the applicant is a serious consideration here. It is well known that the company seeking the permit is struggling with financial issues. The Planning Commission should consider whether the business in question is soundly run, well operated, and whether they will have the ability to pay taxes and rent. Furthermore, if they quickly go out of business, is the door now open for another cannabis retailer to step in and take their place?

There are many reasons to deny this permit: the location, the surrounding businesses, the poorly run applicant, and the timing of the application. Add that together with all the pressing issues in our city that demand the immediate attention of our leadership, and the answer here is a clear no. Let's focus on Pasadena – not on poorly timed and ill-considered cannabis dispensary applications.

Thank you,

Rick and Megan Foker
On behalf of Livable Pasadena